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ABSTRACT

This booklet is a basic introduction to the people, history, and culture of Bosnia (a republic of the former Yugoslavia), with a particular focus on Bosnian Moslems. The booklet is designed primarily for American service providers and sponsors. Particular sections address the following: the Bosnian people; geography; history; educational and vocational backgrounds of Bosnians; religion; art; food and dress; festivities; names; social structure; knowledge of English; the Serbo-Croatian language (pronunciation, articles, nouns, prepositions, and implications for English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) study. Appended materials include an annotated bibliography; ESL resources a glossary; information on music, pronunciation, and names; and basic Serbo-Croatian vocabulary. (VWL)

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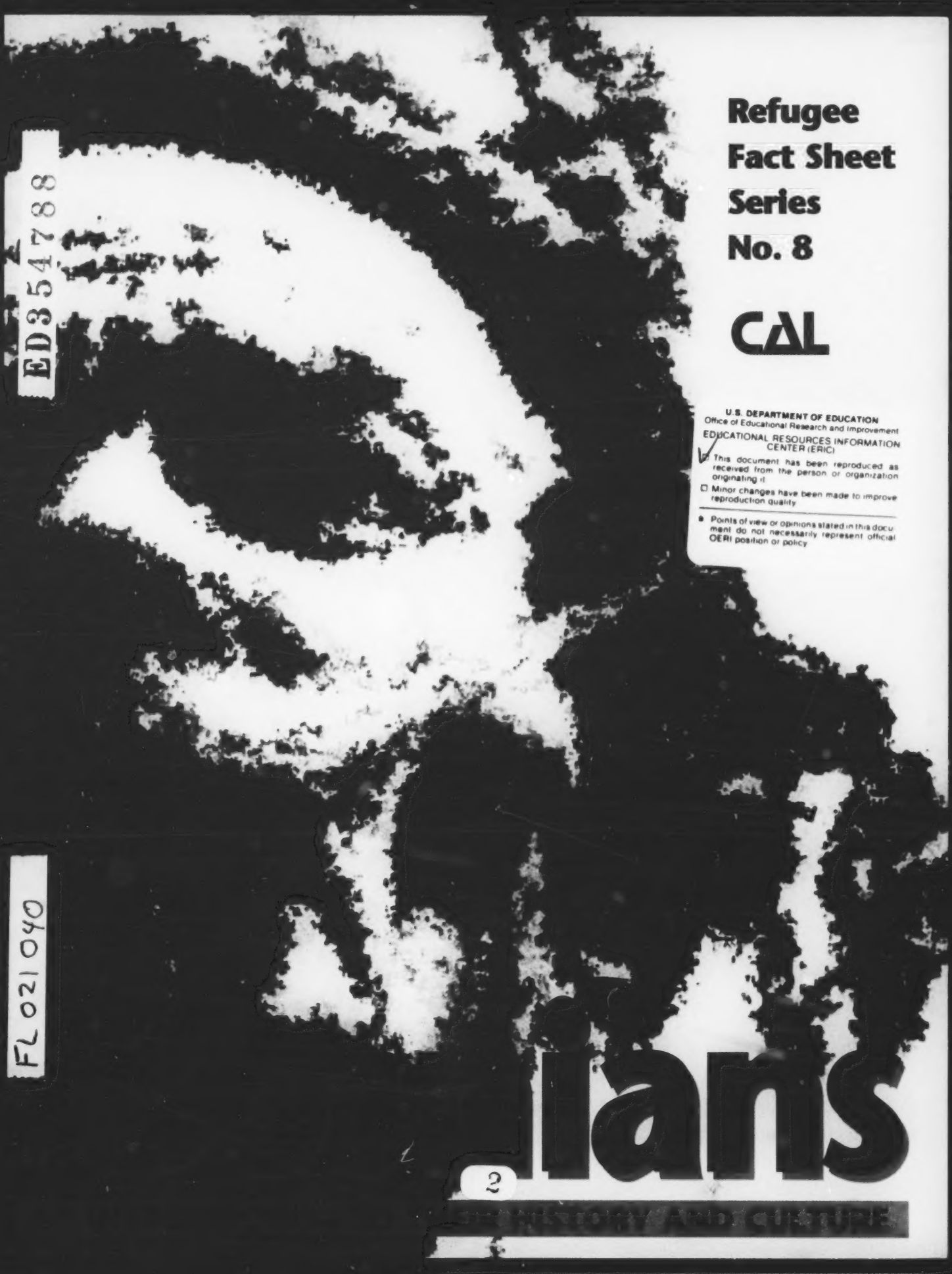

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HISTORY AND CULTURE

CAL Refugee Fact Sheet #8

The Bosnians

An Introduction to Their History and Culture

Lynn Maners

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Preface

This booklet is a basic introduction to the people, history, and culture of Bosnia, with a particular focus on Bosnian Moslems. It is designed primarily for American service providers and sponsors.

The guide was written by Lynn Maners, who conducted ethnographic research in former Yugoslav Bosnia and Hercegovina. At time of going to press, he is a doctoral candidate in anthropology at UCLA and is affiliated with the Institute of South Central European and Balkan Affairs in Los Angeles.

Several other people contributed to this fact sheet. We are especially grateful to Craig Packard, a 1973-1974 Fulbright and IREX scholar to Yugoslavia, for his helpful guidance, and to Wayles Browne, a professor of Slavic languages and linguistics at Cornell University, and William Sage, international liaison for the Immigration and Refugee Program of Church World Service, for reading and commenting on the preliminary draft.

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Introduction

Until the current war in former Yugoslavia began, very few Bosnians had entered the U.S. specifically as refugees from Bosnia. However, some had come as "Yugoslavs." Most of these Bosnians were Serbs and Croats, and they generally settled quickly into long-established immigrant communities founded by their co-ethnics. Thus, Bosnian Serbs tended to settle with other Serbs and Bosnian Croats with local Croatian communities. Bosnian Moslems have been so few in number in the U.S. that there has been no Bosnian Moslem community into which they could integrate.

At the time this fact sheet was prepared, none of the refugees from Bosnia had arrived. However, given the ethnic character of the war, it is presumed that most are Moslems.

The People

Bosnia is the only republic of former Yugoslavia established on a geographical/historical basis rather than on an ethnic one. Bosnian refers to someone who lives in Bosnia and Hercegovina, not to a religious or ethnic group. Before the war, Bosnia's population was approximately 44% Moslem, 31% Serbian, and 17% Croatian, along with a smattering of Gypsies, Albanians, Ukrainians, Poles, and Italians. There were few ethnically homogenous villages in the Republic. To quote the *Encyclopedia Jugoslavije* offprint on Bosnia and Hercegovina (1983), ". . . the three main nations in B-H are almost completely intermixed, so that there are no nationally homogeneous territories, although there are limited areas in which the population of one or two B-H nations prevails." Bosnian Moslems have tended to be a more urban population than their Christian counterparts.

Bosnian Moslems are not ethnic Turks left behind by the Ottoman withdrawal. Rather, they are the descendants of the local Slavs, both Serb and Croat, who converted after the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia in the 15th century. Motives for conversion ranged from escaping Catholic persecution of the native Bogomil sect to retaining rank in the local nobility to escaping taxes placed on the Christian peasantry.

Just exactly who is a Bosnian is a difficult question to answer and the question of the origins of the various nationalities has been a popular one with Yugoslav scholars. The scholars' pronouncements, generally in aid of a lightly disguised political agenda, almost always showed the Bosnian Moslems to be "really" Serbs or "really" Croats. However, until the Austrian occupation in 1878, the question of just who the Bosnian Moslems really were was a moot one. After 1878, the Austrian administration sought to recognize a separate Bosniak native identity to counter claims from Serbia and Croatia. Under the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, established after World War I, Bosnians became the inhabitants of a territory specifically set up to undercut claims of unique ethnic identity for a region. After World War II, Bosnia became a republic of Tito's Yugoslavia. The Moslems in Bosnia, however, gained recognition as a category in official censuses only in 1971. Before that time, many Moslems were identified only as "Yugoslav" or "other."

The language of Bosnia is known as Serbo-Croatian, though as a result of the war many Bosnians will now say, "I speak Bosnian." Romany dialects (gypsy), Albanian, and Ukrainian are spoken by substantial minority groups, and most individuals will have been exposed to some English or German in school.

Bosnia and Hercegovina and Neighboring States

Geography

Dominated by the Dinaric range of mountains, which parallel the Adriatic Coast in a northwesterly-to-southeasterly direction, Bosnia is located in the west central region of former Yugoslavia and consists of four distinct regions. Northern Bosnia contains over 70% of the cultivated land in the former republic and is characterized by low-lying plains along the Sava River border with Croatia and the Drina River border with Serbia. This landscape changes to rolling hills and isolated mountains as one moves south. Central Bosnia, which contains the capital, Sarajevo, is a mountainous region with a number of peaks over 2,000 meters. There is low population density outside the cities. A region of bare limestone ridges and not very fertile valleys encompasses western Bosnia and upland Hercegovina. Lowland Hercegovina, cut through by the swift-flowing green Neretva River, holds the regional capital of Mostar, and Bosnia and Hercegovina finds a toehold on the Adriatic at the rocky beaches of Neum.

Climate in Bosnia and Hercegovina ranges from humid summers and harsh winters in the north and central regions to a Mediterranean climate in lower Hercegovina.

History

Throughout its history, Bosnia (and its companion, Hercegovina) has found itself on the frontier between empires. Bosnia was a part of the Roman province of Illyria, and even then was exploited for its mineral wealth and other natural resources—a practice which continued under subsequent political systems. Like the rest of the Balkan region, Bosnia was subsequently settled by Slavs during their great migration in the 6th and 7th centuries, leading to displacement or, in some cases, assimilation of the native Illyrians. Christianized in the 9th and 10th centuries in the wake of Cyril and Methodius' mission to the Slavs from Byzantium, Bosnia entered the medieval period as a classic, though isolated, feudal state, dependent on agriculture and mining. Post-Christianization isolation from Rome allowed the Bogomils to flourish there. This dualistic sect, heretical from Rome's viewpoint, remained the dominant religion until the advent of Islam.

The Medieval Kingdom of Bosnia did not last long after the defeat of the Serbian and Bosnian feudal nobility at the battle of Kosovo in 1389. Ottoman armies thus found their way open to further expansion into Europe. A long campaign against the Christian armies resulted in the conquest of Bosnia in 1463 and of Hercegovina in 1483. For the next 400 years, until the beginning of Austrian rule, Bosnia found itself relatively isolated from Europe, though the eventual capital, Sarajevo, became an administrative and trading nexus, oriented towards Istanbul. A series of caravanserai, known as *hans,* ultimately connected Bosnia to Persia and China along the Silk Route. A series of *hans* to the west connected Bosnia to Dubrovnik and Venice. During this period, many Bosnian Christians converted to Islam, in some cases to escape the taxes placed on Christians and in other cases to retain their social position as nobility.

As Ottoman power began to wane and Turkey began to be pushed out of Europe, Bosnia became an important frontier for the Turkish state, although an increasingly

unstable one. By the 19th century, much of Bosnia had become turbulent and anarchic; peasant revolts, especially by the Christian peasantry, were a constant threat to stability. In the meantime, Serbia, to the east of Bosnia, won independence from Turkey and established a kingdom. Repeated attempts at reform in the Ottoman Empire were unsuccessful; revolts grew in Bosnia until Austria-Hungary felt compelled to step in. The treaties of San Stefano and of Berlin in 1878 proposed that Austria occupy Bosnia until such time that order and prosperity could be restored.

Europe arrived in Bosnia with the Austrian occupation. Having been left out of the great race for overseas colonies, Austria and its administration decided to treat Bosnia as a model, albeit self-supporting, colony. Much of the infrastructure of modern Bosnia, and especially Sarajevo, the capital, was developed during the Austrian occupation. The first railroads, museums, public transport, and waterways for commercial transport were built. Craft guilds were organized and new systems of agriculture developed. In little more than a generation, Bosnia moved from a backwater of the Ottoman Empire to the edge of an advancing Europe. By 1907, Austria ended what had always been at best a transparent fiction and formally annexed Bosnia and Hercegovina.

Bosnia ignited the spark that started World War I when a local Bosnian Serb, Gavrilo Princip, shot Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914. Tensions escalated sharply as the great powers quickly became involved in what had been a local movement for independence from Austria-Hungary. Russia was drawn in on the side of the Serbs against Turkey, although control of the Black Sea and the Balkans was also on the Russian agenda. Yugoslavia suffered greatly during World War I, since Austria-Hungary drafted its army from, among other places, the peasantry of Bosnia and Croatia—young men whose experiences were described in the Czech writer Jaroslav Hašek's novel, *The Good Soldier Schweik*. In addition to losing huge numbers of young men, the Yugoslav peoples found themselves caught between the armies of Turkey and Austria-Hungary, on the one hand, and those of Russia and the Great Powers on the other. The entire Serbian government and much of its army undertook a long march from Belgrade across Bosnia to the Adriatic Coast, as it fled before advancing Austro-Hungarian troops. The folk song *Tamo Daleko* ("There, So Far Away") is said to commemorate this event. Although trench warfare, of the kind that left millions dead in France, Belgium, and Holland, didn't come to Bosnia's mountains and valleys, Bosnia suffered greatly from 1914 to 1918.

Shortly after the end of World War I, Bosnia was incorporated within the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, ruled by the royal family of Serbia. Unfortunately this "first Yugoslavia" quickly became a maelstrom of contending ethnicities. Attempts at accommodation failed, and this contributed directly to the intercommunal slaughter of World War II. By most accounts, about 1.7 million Yugoslavs lost their lives in World War II. Scholars generally agree that about half of the carnage was internecine, the broader context of the war providing a forum for the narrower agenda of revenge. Bosnia was particularly hard hit by this intercommunal violence because its population was so intermixed.

This first Yugoslavia died with the German invasion. After some formal resistance, the government surrendered, and a guerilla war, called the Struggle for National Liberation (or NOB), against the invaders and their proxies began in the mountains of Bosnia. A multisided war ensued in which Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Moslems, divisions of the German army, *Četniks* (Serbian royalists), *Ustaše* (supporters of the Nazi-controlled Croatian puppet state), and Tito's anti-German Partizans in various combinations fought numerous bloody battles and campaigns of attrition. The second Yugoslavia—Tito's Yugoslavia—was declared in Bosnia (at a conference in Jajce) in 1943. Initially, the Soviet model for the country's administration and development raised hopes for dealing with the question of ethnicity. Later, following Tito's dramatic break with Stalin in 1948, Yugoslavia's "self-management" model and the partial restoration of property rights led to rapid growth and relative prosperity from the mid-1950s to the late 1970s. Until its breakup, Yugoslavia and its variety of Communism was relatively progressive. As the country began to unravel in the 1980s, the party, especially in Serbia, became much more repressive, justifying numerous oppressive practices, directed against non-Serbs, by manipulation of ethnicity issues.

Bosnia's role in the new Yugoslavia was always ambiguous. On the one hand, the census did not at first recognize "Moslem" as an ethnicity. Neither was Bosnia considered a "Moslem" republic. On the other hand, agreements of understanding reached with Moslem leaders allowed the Moslem religion generally to escape persecution under the new regime.

Tito's break with the Comintern in 1948 further enhanced Bosnia's position in the new Yugoslavia. Much heavy industry, many armament factories, and military bases were relocated to central Bosnia where they would, at least theoretically, be safe from a Warsaw Pact armored thrust from Bulgaria or Romania.

Yugoslavia's postwar foreign policy of nonalignment with either East or West and a domestic policy fostering the equality of all of its nations and nationalities gave Yugoslavia prestige in the Third World and among fellow members of the nonaligned movement. These policies also helped the economy to grow strongly, fueled by "soft" loans from such organizations as the International Monetary Fund. It was only with the "oil shocks" of the 1970s that the central government's house of cards began to collapse.

Tito's death in 1980 spelled the beginning of the end for the Yugoslav experiment. Tito left as his political legacy a system for the rotation of government positions among the various republics, i.e., ethnicities. Over the next decade, this system began to fall apart without Tito's personal authority to settle questions of the allocation of resources to republics.

At the end of the 1980s, Slovenia began its drive for secession, with Croatia not far behind. The government of Serbia and leading intellectuals, such as the nationalist author Dobrica Ćosić, the current President of Serbia, responded with open agitation for a Greater Serbia—the union of all Serbs in former Yugoslavia within one contiguous state. They found their intellectual justification in a 1986 memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences which sought to descibe Serbia as an historic "victim" of Yugoslavia.

Slovenia and then Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia. As the Yugoslav war spread from Slovenia to Croatia, it became apparent that Bosnia, the only ex-Yugoslav republic not based on ethnicity, would be the next bone of contention. Despite the Government of Bosnia's attempts to remain outside the conflict, events soon forced it into a referendum in 1992 on independence from what remained of Yugoslavia—a referendum which the Serbian minority boycotted. Approval of the referendum by a majority of voters resulted in international recognition for the new state and an undeclared war with heavily armed Serbia and its proxies. The current war began as Serbia, through its proxy army of local radical militias, Belgrade gangsters, and "demobilized" soldiers of the Yugoslav Peoples' Army, embarked on a campaign of what has become known as "ethnic cleansing"—a form of genocide aimed at eradicating non-Serbs from large sections of Bosnia in order to achieve eventual political union with a Greater Serbia.

Educational and Vocational Backgrounds

As beneficiaries of the state-mandated educational system in former Yugoslavia, most Bosnians are literate in their own language. In the former state system, education through the eighth grade was compulsory for both boys and girls, after which a student could opt for either a vocational/trade school or the more academically oriented gymnasium in order to finish his or her secondary education. Post-secondary education was available at a number of university faculties in the larger cities. "Workers' universities" filled the continuing education role of community colleges in the U.S. The authorities expected that students would complement higher education with practical learning. Most students were assigned a type of part-time apprenticeship related to their field of study. As the Yugoslav economy slowed in the 1980s, jobs for university graduates became increasingly scarce, and many students refused to finish their courses of study in order to continue to qualify for student benefits.

Although Bosnian cities received a huge influx of immigrants from the countryside after World War II, Bosnia still retains a substantial rural population, especially in the northern region of Bosanska Posavina, just south of the Sava River. This population lives in small towns and villages throughout the region, engaging in agriculture and its supporting or related industries. They are not peasants in the Third World sense: Their homes generally have electricity and indoor plumbing, and they may have owned a small tractor, automobile, and even a VCR. Most have completed their primary education through the eighth grade. Some individuals have worked abroad, primarily as guest workers in Germany to help capitalize or improve their farms. Some, especially those from outside the primarily agricultural zones, have been miners or factory workers. City dwellers represent the variety of backgrounds found among city dwellers in Western Europe, and include librarians, teachers, bankers, engineers, linguists, truck drivers, merchants, etc.

Religion

Bosnia, like many isolated areas, developed a mixture of religious beliefs and practices that diverged from the mainstream. In the medieval era, Bosnian Christians embraced Bogomilism, considered heretical by the Catholic Church. In the Ottoman era, with the introduction of Islam, many Christians found reason to convert. Society and governmental control under Ottoman rule were even organized along religious group lines. Thus, for the Serbian Orthodox and Catholic believers, religious authorities were also civil ones—responsible to a certain extent for the members of their respective groups. Sufism also became established in Bosnia, and to this day a Sufi meeting hall still exists in Sarajevo.

Islam in modern Bosnia evolved into a tolerant form with some practices diverging sharply from what is considered orthodoxy in other Islamic countries. Many Bosnians treat their religion much as many Americans do theirs, i.e., something restricted to the Sabbath and major religious holidays. Fundamentalism was discouraged both by the Yugoslav government and the religious community itself, reflecting years of accommodation between the mosque and the state.

Art

The arts were highly developed in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Three major ethnicities yielded a great wealth to be drawn upon in song, dance, literature, and poetry, while the Ottoman and Austrian occupations also left rich architectural legacies.

Sculpture in Bosnia dates back to the pre-Islamic era, as the carved figures of dancers, animals, and other figures on Bogomil tombstones attest. This depiction of the human form carried over into the Islamic period, and the customary Moslem prohibition against representing the human form did not take hold. Still, Islamic arts, such as elaborate calligraphy and fine metalworking, did become features of Bosnian art. Much energy was devoted to religious and domestic architecture; houses featured walled compounds with their distinctive gates, carved wooden ceilings and screens, and built-in seating covered with fine weavings. Handwoven carpets (*kilims*) and knotted rugs were common. In fact, the custom of giving a personally woven dowry rug, with the couple's initials and date of marriage, has only recently disappeared. Other textile arts, like silk embroidery, were also common domestic arts.

Music and dance especially reflected Bosnia's great diversity. Bosnian music can be divided into rural and urban traditions, with the urban tradition more strongly influenced by Turkish musical practice. The rural tradition is characterized by such musical styles as *ravne pesme* (flat song) of limited scale, *ganga*, an almost shouted polyphonic style, and other types of songs which may be accompanied on *šargija* (a simple long-necked lute), wooden flute, or the *diple*, a droneless bagpipe. The urban tradition shows a much heavier Turkish influence, with its melismatic singing (more than one note per syllable) and accompaniment on the *saz*, a larger and more elaborate version of the *šargija*. Epic poems, an ancient tradition, are still sung to the sound of the *gusle*, a single-string bowed fiddle. Bosnia's Jewish heritage is still marked in folksongs sung in Ladino, a dialect descended

from 15th-century Spanish. All of this rich heritage of folk music is, of course, disappearing under the influence of Western pop music and of new native pop music in a folkish style, played on the accordion.

Special mention should be made of *sevdalinka*. Derived from the Turkish word *sevda* (love), *sevdalinka* songs were the most widespread form of music in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Incorporating both Western and Eastern elements, these deeply emotional songs speak metaphorically and symbolically of love won and lost; they came to symbolize Bosnia to natives and foreigners alike.

Bosnian folk dance is arguably the richest and yet least known of all the regional folk dances of former Yugoslavia. Dances range from the silent *kolo* (accompanied only by the sound of stamping feet and the clash of silver ducats on the women's aprons) to line dances in which the sexes are segregated (as they are in the Middle East) to Croatian and Serbian dances indistinguishable from those performed across the borders in their native regions. Like music, however, these folk dances are also rapidly succumbing to the influence of the modern era as European social dances and rock and roll displace them.

Partly to counteract this tendency, the Yugoslav government sponsored more than 400 amateur folklore groups in Bosnia alone. Most emphasized performance of the dance, music, and song of the three major ethnicities of the republic, while a minority specialized in performing contemporary dramatic works, choral performances, and modern dance and ballet. Folklore programs were a regular feature of radio and television programming in Bosnia.

Food and Dress

The cuisine of Bosnia shows influences from Central Europe, the Balkans, and the Middle East. Dishes based on mixtures of lamb, pork, and beef, especially in the form of sausages (called *ćevapčići)* or hamburger-like patties (called *pleskavica*), were grilled along with onions and served hot on fresh *somun* (a thick pita bread). Bosnian hotpot stew (*Bosnanki lonac*), a slow-roasted mixture of layers of meat and vegetables, is the most typical regional specialty. It is usually served directly at the table in its distinctively necked, vase-like ceramic pot. More distinctly Turkish dishes are found in *aščinicas* (oriental restaurants), offering various kinds of *burek* (filled pastry), kebabs, and salads, with baklava for dessert. Pizza, that international dish, is readily available and often served with a cooked egg in the middle. It is generally eaten with a fork rather than the hand. Homemade plum brandy, known in Yugoslavia as *rakija* but exported to the U.S. as *slivovitz*, is the liquor of choice for men on most occasions, while women may opt instead for fruit juice. Popular nonalcoholic beverages other than fruit juices include Turkish-style coffee and a thin yogurt drink.

Huge bags of peppers are always available in the open air markets in the fall for home canning. Wild mushroom hunting is a popular family outing, as are picnics in the spring.

Although only a generation ago Bosnia was well known for having the widest variety of folk costumes in former Yugoslavia, little of this variety can be seen today except in very isolated mountain villages and in the stage costumes of amateur folklore ensembles.

Most urban Bosnians in their daily dress are indistinguishable from other Europeans. In fact, bluejeans are ubiquitous. In large cities like Sarajevo, older men might occasionally be seen in the urban Moslem costume of breeches, cummerbund, striped shirt, vest, and fez. The baggy trousers worn by women (called *dimija*) spread to all three ethnic groups as a folk costume. They are rarely seen on the streets of cities nowadays, but are common in rural districts, and folk costume researchers were fond of saying that you could tell how high in the mountains a woman's village was by how high on the ankles she tied her *dimija* to keep the hems out of the snow. The *čador* (literally 'tent', which covers the woman from head to toe, especially her hair and face), familiar in orthodox Moslem countries, is not worn in Bosnia, even by the most devout Moslem women. Headscarves and raincoats may have been symbolically substituted for the *čador,* particularly on religious holidays.

Festivities

Bosnians celebrate a number of religious, secular, and family holidays. Especially in the cities, where intermarriage is common, families might celebrate the state New Year holiday, Orthodox and Catholic Christmas, and New Year's Day, along with such purely secular occasions as the Day of the Republic and Tito's birthday. Eastern Orthodox Christian families also celebrate the *slava,* or saint's name day of the family.

Moslem festivities center on Ramadan, the month of ritual fasting associated with the lunar calendar. Exchanging household visits and small gifts is a particular feature of the three days at the end of Ramadan (called *Bajram*). During this period the minarets of all the mosques (including the uniquely Bosnian lighthouse-style wooden minaret) are illuminated with strings of electric lights.

Public religious occasions, like the 450th anniversary of the Gazi Husrefbey Mosque in Sarajevo (since hit numerous times by Serbian shelling), often attracted quite large crowds.

On a more secular level, weddings are a major time of celebration, as was army induction day, when young men would leave for their compulsory national service. Soccer matches could draw huge crowds of home-team fans surging through the streets, as could the Bosanska Korrida, during which bulls are encouraged to fight one another. This latter festival especially attracted countryfolk.

Folklore festivals and folklore competitions between amateur performing groups were a major feature of contemporary Bosnian life. Bosnian amateur folklore groups, called Cultural Art Societies, were found throughout the republic. They were required to perform the dance, music, and song folklore of all three major ethnicities in Bosnia—no Cultural Art Society was ever allowed to specialize in the folklore of just one group. Successful performances at local festivities could earn such a society the privilege of performing abroad, generally touring Yugoslav guest worker communities in Western Europe.

Names

Almost all Bosnian family names end in *-ić* (which relates to a sense of "-child of," much like our John-son). Women's first names tend to end in *-a* and *-ica* (pronounced EET-sa), similar to the feminine diminuitive *-ko* in Japanese. Family names are often an indication of ethnicity. *Sulemanagić*, for example, is clearly a Moslem name, as are others containing such Islamic or Turkish roots as *-hadj-* or *-bey-* (or *-beg-*). Family names are passed down the male line, from father to children. Hence, someone with an Islamic-sounding root in his or her last name may be presumed to be, at least technically, a Moslem.

Social Structure

After over 100 years as part of Europe, much of the social structure of Bosnia reflects European custom, with some Mediterranean cultural aspects. Emphasis nowadays is on the nuclear family, although there is sometimes a harkening back to a Slavic, co-dwelling extended family social pattern (called *zadruga*) as a model of cooperation. The recency of urbanization of Bosnia means that many families still have relatives in both the city and country. These contacts allow each to draw on the other's specialized access to resources. Bosnian Moslems may have fewer city/country connections since, from Turkish times on, they have tended to be an urban people. Under Tito's version of socialism and to this day, *veze*—political connections or influence, especially through one's family—became an important avenue for accessing benefits from the system.

Although women were guaranteed full equality and entry into the work force, this came to mean that they held down two jobs, one at the office or factory and one at home. It is the rare male who ever washes a dish.

Polygamy as a Moslem custom was seen only in one isolated region of the country. Most marriages follow the modern custom of love matches, the arranged marriage between families having largely disappeared. Family size has been decreasing as education and prosperity have increased.

Knowledge of English

Many Bosnians know the international English words which have entered so many languages, e.g., telephone, auto, Coca-Cola, hamburger, camping. They will be familiar with the Latin alphabet since Serbo-Croatian is written in both Latin and Cyrillic letters. Indeed, the Latin alphabet was more common in Bosnia. Especially devout Moslems may have learned some Arabic as well.

The Serbo-Croatian Language

Serbo-Croatian belongs to the Slavic branch of the Indo-European language family—more specifically, the group of South Slavic languages which includes Bulgarian, Macedonian, and Slovenian. As such it actually shares a few words which are recognizably related to English, for example:

S-C *sin* = English 'son'
S-C *sestra* = English 'sister'

Written in either the Cyrillic or the Latin alphabets, Serbo-Croatian is a language rich in loan words, not only from other European languages and (lately) English, but also from Turkish, Arabic, and Persian.

In the 19th century, Serbo-Croatian underwent standardization in both Serbia and Croatia by folklorists and linguists to regularize spelling and the phonetic correspondence between spelling and pronunciation. "Write as you speak and speak as you write" was the slogan of this movement. Thus, there are no silent letters, like the *k* in the English knife, nor are there diphthongs.

Pronunciation

Letters are generally pronounced as they are in English with certain exceptions:

j is pronounced as English (consonant) *y*
lj is pronounced as English *l* in lewd (the *l* has a *y* sound attached)
nj is pronounced as English *n* in newt (the *n* has a *y* sound attached)
c is pronounced as English *ts* (as in cats)
ć is pronounced as English *ch* in chirp*
č is pronounced as English *ch* in chug*
đ (capital letter Đ) is pronounced as English *j* in jeep
(sometimes written as the combination *dj* or *Dj)*
dž is pronounced as English *j* in jug
š is pronounced as English *sh* in shout
ž is pronounced as English *z* in azure

Consonants. Serbo-Croatian has 25 consonants, of which 7 *(j, l, lj, r, m, n,* and *nj)* are voiced but have no voiceless equivalents. Three consonants *(h, f, c)* are unvoiced and have no voiced equivalents. There are 7 voiced/voiceless pairs, accounting for another 14 consonants *(b/p, d/t, g/k, z/s, ž/š, dj/ć, dž/č)* and one voiced/unvoiced equivalent *(v, f),* which do not form a pair.

The soft consonants (palatal and palatalized) are *c, ć, č, dj, dž, ž, lj, nj,* and *j*. The remaining consonants are hard.

* Serbo-Croatian distinguishes between two types of "ch" sound—a distinction that English does not make.

Vowels. Vowel pronunciation varies not only by length but also by tonal accent or pitch. A change in vowel length or pitch (long rising or falling, short rising or falling), then, can change the meaning of a word. In general, this feature of the language is most noticeable in speakers of the Serbian variant of Serbo-Croatian. Among many speakers, use is diminishing or disappearing.

Articles

There is no direct correspondence between English and Serbo-Croatian when it comes to definite and indefinite articles. Serbo-Croatian sometimes indicates definiteness or indefiniteness by changing the ending of an adjective. Otherwise, there is no separate word corresponding to English *a* or *the*.

Nouns

Every noun has gender (male, female, neuter), number (singular or plural), and case. Unlike English, which uses the placement of words next to each other to indicate grammatical relationships, Serbo-Croatian indicates grammatical relationships primarily through cases—word endings or inflections. Thus, Serbo-Croatian is an inflected language, with very flexible word order rules, in contrast to English, in which word order is critical. The cases (inflections) used are: the nominative, the accusative, the genitive, the vocative, the dative/locative, and the instrumental. If you remember any Latin, you will find some very clear similarities between Latin and Serbo-Croatian.

Prepositions

Each preposition in Serbo-Croatian requires a corresponding case ending for the noun it modifies. Speakers can tell from a case ending when a preposition indicates, for example, motion towards rather than location.

Implications for ESL Study

Speakers of Serbo-Croatian generally have few pronunciation difficulties with English, although the "th" and "w" sounds may give them some trouble. However, when it comes to grammar, they may find English verbs very hard to understand. The use of auxiliary verbs in English—do, be, and the modal verbs might, could, should, would—present real hurdles. Serbo-Croatian uses only the verbs *biti* (to be) and *hteti* (to want) as auxiliaries, e.g., *ona je igrala* (she was playing) *ona će igrati* (she will/wants to play). Particular difficulty arises with English question formation, where the auxiliary verb precedes the subject pronoun, e.g., "Was she playing?" or "Will she play?" It is also worth noting that speakers of Serbo-Croatian have difficulty recognizing American names as typical of a man or woman. Lack of a sex-specific name ending (such as the *-ica* ending for women's names) is confusing.

Speakers of Serbo-Croatian may also have difficulty with English prepositions of location and motion and agency, e.g., *in, on, to, at, by, with,* or *from*, since they will look for case endings, which English does not have.

Annotated Bibliography

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Although Andrić actually spent much of his life outside of Bosnia, this novel/chronicle is highly evocative of everyday life in Bosnia during the Turkish period and under Austro-Hungarian rule.

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Lockwood, William G. *European Moslems—Economy and Ethnicity in Western Bosnia*. New York: Academic Press (subsidiary of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), 1975.

Lockwood, the first American anthropologist to do extended fieldwork in Bosnia, rewrote his dissertation on ethnic relations and village life around the western Bosnian market town of Bugojno.

Lord, Albert B. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960.

As the introduction states, "This book is about Homer." Lord uses the living singers of tales—the epic folk poets of Bosnia—to illuminate aspects of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Maners, Lynn D. "The Social Lives of Dances: The Transformation and Recontextualization of Expressive Behavior in Bosnia and Hercegovina." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1993.

Examines the role of the state in shaping folklore performances, specifically the role of amateur folklore ensembles in transferring dance and music from the village green to the stage.

Discography

Music of Yugoslavia—Bosnia. Monitor MFS 412.

A standard collection, mostly in studio performance of Bosnian tunes.

Čalgija—Music from the Balkans and Anatolia. Stoof MU 7425.

A Dutch group's renditions of a traditional Balkan urban musical genre. The one tune from Bosnia, "Haj, otkako je Banja Luka postala," alone is well worth the price of the album.

Traditional Music from the Soil of Bosnia-Hercegovina. dt LP8149.

The only comprehensive collection exploring all the folk musical genres of Bosnia and Hercegovina. Compiled by Dr. Ankica Petrović of the Ethnomusicology Department of Sarajevo University for the "European Year of Music—1985." Highly recommended, but may be very difficult to find.

Festival Records, located at 2773 West Pico Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90066, tel. (213) 737-3500, has available for both rental and sale videotapes and records of Bosnian music and dance.

ESL Resources

The Oxford-Duden Pictorial Serbo-Croat & English Dictionary. Imprint of OUP. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Benson, Morton. *An English-Serbocroatian Dictionary*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979.

Benson, Morton. Serbocroatian-English Dictionary. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971. Also published as *Srpskohrvatsko-Engleski Rečnik*. Prosveta, 1974.

Gorup, Radmila Jovanović. *The Semantic Organization of the Serbo-Croatian Verb*. Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1987.

Glossary

baklava	flat pan-cooked dessert made from layers of thin flaky pastry including ground nuts, honey or sugar syrup, and spices (a specialty of Greek restaurants in the U.S.)
Bogomilism	form of dualistic Christianity, embraced during the medieval era by Bosnian Christians, considered heretical by the Catholic Church
Bosanski lonac	Bosnian hotpot stew—a slow-roasted mixture of layers of meat and vegetables
burek	filled pastry, containing perhaps eggs or cheese or ground meat and onions (like the spinach and cheese pie served in Greek restaurants)
čador	(literally 'tent') garment, usually dark-colored, for women that covers the woman from head to toe, especially her hair and face, prescribed for public wear in orthodox Moslem countries
Četniks	World War II royalists—supporters of the monarchy against both Tito's Communist partisans and the (Nazi) German and Croatian (Ustaše) units
ćevapčići	small grilled skinless sausages
Ćosić, Dobrica	currently (as of early 1993) President of Yugoslavia, a well-known writer
ethniccleansing	form of genocide aimed at eradicating non-Serbs from large sections of Bosnia or Croatia
gastarbeiter	(from the German) guest worker in a foreign country who usually sends money back to hometown relatives
IMF	International Monetary Fund
kafana	café and local pub or place for hanging out—in Bosnia, often reserved for men only
kebabs	meat (sometimes with vegetables) grilled on a long stick, e.g., shish kebab
kilim	handwoven carpet
Milošević, Slobodan	President of Serbia
Ottoman Empire	The former Turkish empire, with Constantinople as its capital, which included much of present-day Southeastern Europe and the Balkans and large parts of the Middle East. It peaked in the 16th and 17th centuries.
pleskavica	hamburger patty
rakija	plum brandy (known in the U.S. as slivovitz)
sevdalinka	song of love (from Turkish *sevda*), popular in Bosnia and Hercegovina
slava	saint's name day of the family, celebrated by Eastern Orthodox Christians
somun	thick pita bread
Sufism	Moslem sect related to that of the Turkish dervishes, known in Bosnia during the time of the Ottoman Empire

Tito, Josip Broz	Leader of the Communist partisans who successfully defeated the Germans during World War II on Yugoslav soil and liberated Yugoslavia by their own efforts. He was President of Yugoslavia from 1946 until his death in 1980
Ustaše	World War II supporters of the Nazi-controlled Croatian puppet state, who fought mainly against the Četniks and Tito's Communist partisans
Veze	political connections or influence, especially through one's family

Names

Almost all Bosnian family names end in *-ić* (pronounced EACH as in TEACH). Women's first names tend to end in *-a* and *-ica* (pronounced EET-sa), e.g., Ana or Anica.

Pronunciation

Letters are generally pronounced as they are in English with certain exceptions:

j is pronounced as English (consonant) *y*
lj is pronounced as English *l* in lewd (the *l* has a *y* sound attached)
nj is pronounced as English *n* in newt (the *n* has a *y* sound attached)
c is pronounced as English *ts* (as in cats)
ć is pronounced as English *ch* in chirp*
č is pronounced as English *ch* in chug*
đ (capital letter Đ) is pronounced as English *j* in jeep
(sometimes written as the combination *dj* or *Dj)*
dž is pronounced as English *j* in jug
š is pronounced as English *sh* in shout
ž is pronounced as English *z* in azure

Serbo-Croatian also uses a so-called vocalic *r*, meaning an *r* that can serve as a vowel, e.g., in the word for "14"—*četrnaest.* The closest rendering in English is with the *-er* sound, as in *her*.

The combination vowel + *j* produces a long vowel with a sound similar to English diphthongs, e.g.,

o plus *j* (oj) sounds like *oy* (as in boy)
e plus *j* (ej) sounds like *ey* (as in hey!)
i plus *j* (ij) sounds like *ea* (as in easy)
a plus *j* (aj) sounds like *y* as a vowel (as in try)
u plus *j* (uj) sounds like *ewy* (as in chewy)

* Serbo-Croatian distinguishes between two types of "ch" sound—a distinction that English does not make.

You may want to consult either of the two dictionaries by Morton Benson (see **ESL Resources** on page 14) for a basic outline of the language.

Some Basic Serbo-Croatian Vocabulary

Phrases		**Numbers**	
Good morning	Dobro jutro	0	nula
Good evening	Dobro veče (or dobar večer)	1	jedan, jedna, jedno
Good night	Laku noć	2	dva (or dvije for fem. nouns)
Hello (good day)	Dobar dan	3	tri
Goodbye	Dovidjenja	4	četiri
How are you	Kako ste	5	pet
Thanks, fine, and you	Hvala, dobro, a vi	6	šest
Miss	Gospodjica	7	sedam
Mister	Gospodin	8	osam
Mrs.	Gospodja	9	devet
Thank you	Hvala (pr. FA-la)	10	deset
Please	Molim	11	jedanaest
Never mind	Ništa, ništa	12	dvanaest
Yes	Da (or jeste)	13	trinaest
No	Ne	14	četrnaest
Today	Danas	15	petnaest
Yesterday	Juče (or Jučer)	16	šestnaest
Tomorrow	Sutra	17	sedamnaest
Next week	Iduće nedjelje	18	osamnaest
Last week	Prošle nedjelje	19	devetnaest
Every week	Svake nedjelje	20	dvadeset
Every day	Svaki dan	30	trideset
Once a week	Jednom nedjeljno	40	četrdeset
Twice a week	Dvaput nedjeljno	50	pedeset
Once a month	Jednom mjesečno	60	šezdeset
Wait a little	čekajte malo	70	sedamdeset
At what time	U koliko sati	80	osamdeset
At noon	U podne	90	devedeset
In the evening	Uveče	100	sto (stotina)
In the morning	Ujutro		
In the afternoon	Poslije podne		

I like	Volim (ja volim)
I do not like (don't want)	Ne volim (ne želim)
good	dobro
terrible	strašno
father	otac, tata
mother	majka, mama
son	sin
daughter	ćerka
child	dijete
brother	brat
sister	sestra
Thank God	Hvala Bogu
to eat	jesti
to drink	piti
toilet	toaleta, ve-ce
shower	tuš

Bosnia and Hercegovina and Neighboring States